

Of how goodly spak this knight,
As it had been another wight;
He made it nouthenough ne queynte.

And I saw that, and gan me aqueynte
With him, and fond him so trefable,
Right wonder skilful and resonable,
As me thoghte, for al his bale.

Anoon/right I gan finde a tale
To him, to loken where I might ought
Have more knowing of his thought.

IR, quod I, this game is doon;
I holde that this hert be goon;
Thise huntres conne him nowher see.

I do no fors therof, quod he,
My thought is theron never a del.

Your lord, quod I, I trow yow wel,
Right so me thinketh by your chere.
But, sir, oo thing wol ye here?

Me thinketh, in gret sorwe I yow see;
But certes, good sir, yif that ye
Wolde ought discure me your wo,

I wolde, as wis God helpe me so,
Amende hit, yif I can or may;
Ye mowe preve hit by assay.

for, by my trouthe, to make yow hool,
I wol do al my power hool;

And telleth me of your sorwes smerte,
Paraventure hit may ese your herte,
That semeth ful seke under your syde.

With that he loked on me asyde,
As who sayth, Nay, that wol not be.

Graunt mercy, goode frend, quod he,
I thanke thee that thou woldest so,
But hit may never the rather be do.

No man may my sorwe glade,
That maketh my hewe to falle and fade,
And hath myn understanding lorn,

That me is wo that I was born!
May nocht make my sorwes slyde,
Nought the remedies of Ovyde;

Ne Orpheus, god of melodye,
Ne Dedalus, with playes slye;
Ne hele me may phisicien,

Noght Ypocras, ne Galien;
Me is wo that I live houres twelve;
But who so wol assaye himselve

Whether his herte can have pite
Of any sorwe, lat him see me.
I wrecche, that deeth hath mad al naked

Of alle blisse that was ever maked,
Yworthe worste of alle wightes,
That hate my dayes and my nightes;

My lyf, my lustes be me lothe,
for al welfare and I be wrothe.
The pure deeth is so my fo,

Thogh I wolde deye, hit wolde not so;
for whan I folwe hit, hit wol flee;
I wolde have hit, hit nil not me.

This is my peyne withoute reed,
Alway deyng, and be not deed,
That Sesiphus, that lyth in helle,
May not of more sorwe telle.

And who so wiste al, by my trouthe,
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My sorwe, but he hadde routhe
And pite of my sorwes smerte,
That man hath a feendly herte.

for who so seeth me first on morwe
May seyn, he hath ymet with sorwe;
for I am sorwe and sorwe is I.

ALAS! and I wol telle the why;
My song is turned to pleyning,
And al my laughter to weping,

My glade thoghtes to hevynesse,
In travaile is myn ydelnesse
And eek my reste; my wele is wo.

My good is harm, and evermo
In wrathe is turned my pleyning,
And my delyt into sorwing.

Myn hele is turned into seeknesse,
In drede is al my sikernesse.
To derke is turned al my light,

My wit is foly, my day is night,
My love is hate, my sleep waking,
My mirthe and meles is fasting,

My countenance is nyctete,
And al abaved wherso I be,
My pees, in pleyding and in werre;

Alas! how mighte I fare werre?
Y boldnesse is turned to shame,
for fals fortune hath pleyd a game

Atte ches with me, alas! the why!
The trayteresse fals and ful of gyle,
That al behoteth and nothing halt,

She goth upryght and yet she halt,
That baggeth foule and loketh faire,
The dispitouse debonaire,

That scorneth many a creature!
An ydole of fals portraiture
Is she, for she wil sone wryen;

She is the monstres heed ywryen;
As filth over ystrawed with floures;
Hir moste worship and hir flour is

To lyen, for that is hir nature;
Withoute feyth, lawe, or mesure
She is fals; and ever laughinge

With oon eye, and that other wepinge.
That is broght up, she set al down.
I lykne hir to the scorpion,

That is a fals flatering beste;
for with his hede he maketh feste,
But al amid his flatering

With his tayle he wol stinge,
And envenyme; and so wol she.
She is thenvyous charite

That is ay fals, and semeth wele,
So turneth she hir false whele
About, for it is nothing stable,

Now by the fyre, now at table;
ful many oon hath she thus yblent.
She is pley of enchaunement,

That semeth oon and is nat so,
The false theef! what hath she do,
Trowest thou? by our Lord, I wol thee seye.

Atte ches with me she gan to pley;
With hir false draughtes divers
She stal on me, and took my fers.

And whan I saw my fers aweye,
Alas! I couthe no lenger pleye,
But seyde, farwel, swete, ywis,

And farwel al that ever ther is!
Therwith fortune seyde Chek here!
And Mate! in mid pointe of the chekere

With a pounne erraunt, alas!
ful craftier to pley she was
Than Hethalus, that made the game

First of the ches: so was his name.
But God wolde I had ones or twyes
Thoud and knowe the jeupardyes!

That coude the Grek Pithagores!
I shulde have pleyd the bet at ches,
And kept my fers the bet therby;

And thogh wherto? for trewely
I hold that wish nat worth a stree!
Hit had be never the bet for me.

for Fortune can so many a wyle,
Ther be but fewe can hir begyle,
And eek she is the las to blame;

Myself I wolde have do the same,
Before God, hadde I been as she;
She oghte the more excused be.

for this I say yet more therto,
hadde I be God and mighte have do
My wille, whan my fers she caughte,

I wolde have drawe the same draughte.
for, also wis God yive me reste,
I dar wel swere she took the beste!

BUT through that draughte I have lorn
My blisse; alas! that I was born!
for evermore, I trowe trewely,

for al my wil, my lust hoolly
is turned; but yet, what to done?
By our Lord, hit is to deye sone;

for nothing I ne leve it noght,
But live and deye right in this thoght.
Ther nis planete in firmament,

Ne in air, ne in erthe, noon element,
That they ne yive me a yift echoon
Of weping, whan I am aloon.

for whan that I avyse me wel,
And betheken me everydel,
How that ther lyth in rekening,

In my sorwe, for nothing;
And how ther leveth no gladnesse
May gladde me of my distresse,

And how I have lost suffisance,
And therto I have no plesance,
Than may I say, I have right noght.

And whan al this falleth in my thoght,
Alas! than am I overcome!
for that is doon is not to come!

I have more sorwe than Tantale.
And whan I herde him telle this tale
Thus pitously, as I yow telle,

Unnethe mighte I lenger dwelle,
Hit dide myn herte so moche wo.
GOOD sir! quod I, say not so!

I have som pite on your nature;
That formed yow to creature;
Remembre yow of Socrates;

for he ne counted nat three strees
Of noght that fortune coude do.
No, quod he, I can not so.

WHAT so? good sir! parde! quod I;
Ne say noght so, for trewely,
Thogh ye had lost the ferses twelve,

And ye for sorwe mordred yourselve,
Ye sholde be dampned in this cas
By as good right as Medea was,

That slow hir children for Jason;
And Phyllis als for Demophon
heng himself, so weylaway!

for he had broke his terme/day
To come to hir. Another rage
had Dydo, quene eek of Cartage,

That slow herself, for Eneas
was fals; al whiche a fool she was!
And Equo dyed for Narcisus

Nolde nat love hir; and right thus
hath many another foly don.
And for Dalida dyed Sampson,

That slow himself with a pilere.
But ther is noon alyve here
Wolde for a fers make this wo!

WHAT so? quod he; hit is nat so;
Thou wost ful litel what thou menest;
I have lost more than thou weneest.

I o, sir, how may that be? quod I;
Good sir, tel me al hoolly
In what wyse, how, why, and wherfore

That ye have thus your blisse lorn.
LYCHLY, quod he, com sit adoun;
I telle thee up condicioun

That thou hoolly, with al thy wit,
Do thyn entent to herkene hit.
Yis, sir, Swere thy trouthe therto.

Gladly. Do than holde herto!
I shal right blythly, so God me save,
hoolly, with al the witte I have,

Here yow, as wel as I can.
GODDES half! quod he, and began:
Sir, quod he, sith first I couthe

Have any maner wit fro youthe,
Or kyndely understanding
To comprehend, in any thing,

What love was, in myn owne wit,
Dredeles, I have ever yit
Be tributary, and yiven rente

To love hoolly with goode entente,
And through plesauce become his thral,
With good wil, body, herte, and al.

At this I putte in his servage,
As to my lorde, and dide homage;
And ful devoutly prayde him to,

He shulde besette myn herte so,
That it plesauce to him were,
And worship to my lady dere.

And this was longe, and many a yeer
Or that myn herte was set owher,
That I did thus, and niste why;

I trowe hit cam me kindly.
Paraunter I was therto most able
As a whyt wal or a table;